

When we watch a movie, we are actually seeing thirty-two frames every second. It takes all of those individual pictures each second to provide our eyes with a clear and fluid picture. Imagine if you were to watch a movie with one frame every ten years, how much you would miss. Unfortunately, the Decennial Census can only take one picture every ten years. The American Community Survey is a tool which can paint a clear picture of our country by filling in the blank spaces. Imagine how much clearer the picture would be if the number of pictures were to be doubled, tripled, or even increased by a factor of ten.

I hope that the primary goal of each of the elected officials in our country is to serve the people they represent. In order to serve people, one must know something about them. The American Community Survey (ACS) is the tool that can make this possible. The Decennial Census helps us react to the needs of the people in our community. The American Community Survey allows us to be proactive in meeting the needs of the people in our area by helping us observe trends as they are building and growing.

The Fulton County Partnership, Inc. located in Fulton County Pennsylvania, an extremely rural county in South Central PA, is dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents by developing the fullest potential for children, families, and individuals through an integrated, collaborative and comprehensive system of health, education, and human services. As a test site for the ACS, we have had up to date information since 1996. I would like to provide just one example of how the ACS data have helped us meet real needs in a real way.

One of the programs of the Fulton County Partnership, Inc. (FCPI) is an influenza vaccination program. We provide free flu vaccinations to high risk individuals. The vast majority of high risk individuals in Fulton County are senior citizens, so we hold a clinic in each of the three Fulton County Senior Centers. There is a senior center in the north, the center, and the south of the county. We must purchase our vaccine months in advance, and in order to be good stewards of our resources, we have to make an educated guess of how many vaccine doses we will need. The ACS data are the most up to date, and give us a good starting point for determining how many doses to purchase.

Next, we have to determine how many doses to allocate to each location. Now because we are in a small rural community, we must be extremely careful that we not slight one area, because there is so often a feeling that all services are provided only in the central area. We used the ACS data to determine the number of doses to send to each location, and we ended up having enough doses for everyone who attended with only five extras. Although this was for the 2002 Flu season, we had to order materials in February of 2001 and we still did not have the data from the 2000 Census. (We have been impressed with the turnaround time of the ACS data.) Here is how we used these data.

We know that each senior center serves certain townships, we are able to calculate the number of senior citizens in each township using ACS data as follows:

**McConnellsburg Senior** Center – serves elderly from McConnellsburg Borough, Todd, Ayr and Licking Creek Townships.

**Hustontown Senior Center** – serves elderly from Dublin, Taylor and Wells Townships.

**Warfordsburg Senior Center** – serves elderly from Belfast, Bethel, Brush Creek, Thompson, Valley-Hi and Union Townships.

The tables below show the senior population in each township, according to the ACS date, as compared to the 1990 Census Data.

<b>McConnellsburg Center Name of Township</b>	<b>1990 65+ Population</b>	<b>ACS (1996) 65+ Population</b>
McConnellsburg Borough	225	289
Ayr	167	211
Todd	143	92
Licking Creek	178	219
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>811</b>

<b>Hustontown Center Name of Township</b>	<b>1990 65+ Population</b>	<b>ACS (1996) 65+ Population</b>
Dublin	155	189
Taylor	172	124
Wells	84	61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>374</b>

<b>Warfordsburg Center Name of Township</b>	<b>1990 65+ Population</b>	<b>ACS (1996) 65+ Population</b>
Belfast	135	261
Bethel	166	178
Brush Creek	113	119
Thompson	107	127
Valley-Hi Borough	8	0
Union	79	92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>777</b>

- ❖ We know that there have been slightly more than 31% of the seniors vaccinated in the past, so we ordered 650 vaccinations last year which is approximately 33% of the seniors counted in the 1996 ACS plus a few extras for other high risk residents, and rounded to a multiple of ten. (The doses are in vials of ten.)
  - ❖ Using the previous charts with the ACS data, there are 811 elderly citizens or 41% of the elderly population who could attend the McConnellsburg Center; and
  - ❖ 374 or 19% who could attend the Hustontown Center; and
  - ❖ 777 or 40% who could attend the Warfordsburg Center.
  - ❖ Using those percentages, 266 doses should go to McConnellsburg; 124 to Hustontown; and 260 to Warfordsburg.
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- ❖ Using old 1990 data, flu vaccine would likely have been allocated at 41% or 266 doses for McConnellsburg (Okay)
  - ❖ 24% or 156 doses for Hustontown (off by 32 doses or 5%); and
  - ❖ 35% or 228 doses for Warfordsburg (off by 32 doses 5%).

This may be a simple example of how the ACS data have helped us make smart use of our resources, but we envision so much more. When we receive the Decennial Census information, we look carefully at the picture it paints, and we try to react to what we see. For example, if we see a high level of poverty in one township, we will work to meet the needs of those people who are hurting. The sad part of that is that they are already in poverty. With ACS, we can see trends starting, and we can be proactive in making sure that needs are met.

The old axiom, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” seems to apply here. Everything we can do to be proactive in meeting the needs of residents whether it be in our service area, our constituency, or our families, saves money in the long term, as well as works toward building stronger and healthier communities.

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Another Program of the Fulton County Partnership, Inc. is our Dental Clinic. Our clinic is staffed entirely by volunteer dentists. Each of our sixteen dentists volunteers between three and five Fridays each year to come and provide services to residents of Fulton County. Even though their services are free, we must pay our Dental Assistant, Dental Hygienist, and for our supplies, tools, and equipment. We rely on Grant funding for these needs.

Dental care is one of the highest priority needs in Fulton County. Outside of our dental clinic, there are only five Dentists in the county. Only two of those dentists accept the Medical Assistance ACCESS Card, and they only allow a very small percentage of their clients to be ACCESS card holders. All in all, this provides Dental Care for approximately 50 to 100 low income residents.

One of our important aims is to provide the highest standard of care, and treat our customers with dignity and respect. The volunteer doctors are committed to these tenets, but can not meet these lofty aims without quality equipment and supplies. The Fulton County Partnership, Inc. applied for a state Challenge Grant in 2000. The Data from the 2000 census was not available yet, so we used the data from the 1996 American Community Survey to effectively demonstrate the need based on the percentage of low income people in Fulton County, and received the grant.

I believe that the ACS data has been used to clearly demonstrate the need for this clinic, and has provided the backing and support of community agencies that has been needed to keep this clinic going as an effective concern.

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Fulton County, PA is without question, a small county. There are many advantages to that, but there are an equal number of disadvantages. There is one major employer in Fulton County, and that is JLG Industries. JLG Industries is the worlds largest manufacturer of industrial lifts such as the ones in the picture to the right and below. You may recognize them by their distinctive orange and yellow colors. JLG is a great asset to Fulton County. Unfortunately, JLG is extremely closely tied to the construction industry. When there is lots of construction, there are lots



of lifts needed. But when there is not a lot of construction, there is not a great demand for lifts, and as a result there are many layoffs at JLG. Fulton has in the past gone from the lowest unemployment rate in the country to the highest unemployment rate in the state in a matter of eight months.



Because of the close-knit nature of the county, residents may see these trends, and be aware of the swings of the economy. Sadly, when funding sources look at the census data which may at times be more than ten years old, the data only represents one small slice of time but does not relate to the current needs. The ACS data are relevant. They give a clearer picture of today's needs.

We use ACS data locally to identify needs and prevent minor problems from becoming major problems. The Partnership has a program called the Employment Transportation Assistance Program (ETAP). The program is designed to help low income working residents keep working by helping them with their employment transportation needs. The program can help them with gas costs, vehicle repairs, vehicle purchase, insurance, inspection, and registration fees.

ACS data shows us where the low income populations are, and we focus our efforts in those areas. This allows us to be cost effective in reaching our target audience, and more importantly, by helping us invest our resources wisely, we can prevent individuals from coming to the point of needing welfare. Thanks to the clear picture presented by the ACS data, the Partnership was able to justify an increase in funding for the ETAP Program in the fiscal year 2000-2001 from \$6,000 to \$60,000. each year. (A

funding increase request for ETAP was denied for 1995-1996 because we could not demonstrate a need for increased funding with the data that was available.)

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I believe that the data provided by the American Community Survey helps the partnership meet it's goal of improving the quality of life in Fulton County, PA. When we can identify needs, and help people develop their fullest potential, we save money. When a person is working, they are self sufficient. When a person has a healthy smile, they have a better chance of getting a job. When a person stays healthy and avoids the Flu, they stay out of the hospital which saves money. In short, the more information we have about the people we serve, the more efficient we can be with the resources we have to help them. In our society today, information is the most valuable asset one can have. The American Community Survey is the best tool I have seen to give clear, concise, accurate, and timely information.

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#### Thomas Reardon Biography:

Thomas Reardon is originally from the Philadelphia area. He attended Shippensburg University where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Public Relations. Tom has had a varied career including positions such as District Executive with the Hiawatha Council Boy Scouts of America, Lead Teacher in an alternative school, supervisor in a Juvenile Corrections facility, and is currently the Executive Director of the Fulton County Partnership, Inc. where he has been for two years. Tom's wide range of experience has helped him succeed in bringing rapid growth to the Fulton County Partnership, Inc.

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